



# Hill West Primary School

## Pedagogical Newsletter – October 2020

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### In this issue:

*Covid-19*

*Recovery Curriculum  
at Hill West*

*Reading*

*Home and Blended  
Learning*

*Brain Development*

*Phonic Screening for  
Year 2*

*Times Tables Rock  
Stars*

*Domestic Abuse*



### Reminders:

*School closes for half term  
on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October.*

*School reopens on  
Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. I  
hope you all have a lovely  
half term holiday.*

### Covid-19

Covid-19 has obviously had a major impact on the lives of us all and in many ways continues to do so. I want to thank you all for your patience, understanding and support at this very difficult time. Keeping the staff, our children and of course all of you as safe as possible remains my number one consideration. Our pupils have shown incredible resilience in the face of adversity and have told us how pleased they are to be back at school; learning and being with their friends. We hope sincerely that full school closures are behind us. Inevitably, this virus is persistent and virulent and I would ask that you continue to take all the necessary precautions to keep yourself and your family safe. That may be wearing a face covering to school when dropping off or collecting, it will most certainly involve keeping a distance from others and I appreciate there are many out of school considerations for us to manage too. If you need to talk, please just let us know. We are here to help.



### The Recovery Curriculum at Hill West

When we returned to school this September many of our children had been out of school for a little over 5 months. As such our curriculum needed to be responsive and precisely focused to address gaps in learning. We wanted our curriculum delivery to be underpinned by three core principles:

- Strong, purposeful teaching to maximises learning time;
- Well-planned, targeted schemes of work supported by excellent assessment for learning;
- Powerful welfare and pastoral systems (daily PDW teaching)

We remain committed to ensuring our children were able to flourish socially, emotionally and academically through well-taught, progressive curriculum content.

We know that children make good progress across the curriculum and in individual subject disciplines when we build on what they already know and what they can already do. As we begin to recover from the prolonged absence we have prioritised learning in the

following subjects

- **English** (communication, speaking and listening, phonics, reading, comprehending writing including handwriting)
- **Maths** (arithmetic, reasoning and problem solving)
- **Science**
- **Personal Development and Well-Being**
- **Physical Education**

We know, to commit new knowledge or skills to the long-term memory, there is a need for regular retrieval, practice and consolidation. This has been more important than ever this term and teachers have built in time in each day to support retrieval, practice and consolidation.

**Reading is our main priority** and our teachers have committed to read aloud to the children at least twice every day. We know that children who read only one book a day hear about 290,000 more words by age 5 than those who don't regularly read books with a parent or care giver (Logan, 2019). Therefore, it is our unquestionable duty to expose all children to the joys of story language through varied and challenging, age appropriate texts.





# Home and Blended Learning

## Reading



### Book recommendations to develop vocabulary for Key Stage One

The way home for wolf

The squirrels who squabbled

Ruby's worry

Zoom books

You choose

Du Zu Tak – Carton

This is not my hat

Previously

There is a wocket in my pocket

Hairy Mclairy

My cat likes to hide in boxes

Oi Frog

We're going on a bear hunt

Leon and the place between y2/y3

Flotsam

The secret of black rock

As you know most pupils returned to school full time at the start of the autumn term 2020. Despite this, there is still a risk of localised outbreaks of coronavirus (COVID-19) or of small numbers of individual pupils being unable to attend school. As such the Department for Education has requested that all schools plan for any disruption to schooling during the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

The period since 23 March 2020 has been one of great innovation in remote education. A wide range of approaches has been developed, tested and refined. Despite the challenges, remote education has made a significant contribution to enabling pupils to continue to learn and progress, and to mitigate against the loss of time in school.

Now that we are in the Autumn Term the DfE had advised that where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or there are local restrictions requiring pupils to remain at home, they expect schools to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has found that the effectiveness of remote teaching is determined by many of the same factors as determine the effectiveness of live classroom teaching. For example:

- ensuring pupils receive clear explanations
- supporting growth in confidence with new material through scaffolded practice
- application of new knowledge or skills
- enabling pupils to receive feedback on how to progress

These characteristics of good teaching are more important than the medium of delivery, be it in the 'live' classroom or through remote provision (whether or not that remote provision is live or pre-recorded). We have given a great deal of thought of how we best support remote education at Hill West. We know, from experience in the Summer term that live classrooms enable important interaction between teachers and pupils through, for example, questioning, eliciting and reflective discussion. These complex teacher skills in the live classroom are not always easy to recreate in a remote environment, but where remote education recreates at least some aspects of this interactivity and intentional dialogue, teaching is likely to be more effective, support pupil motivation and lead to better progress.

Access to appropriate devices and connectivity is essential for technology-led approaches to remote education. However, securing access for all pupils is a significant challenge in many contexts. As schools plan for potential future disruption, it would be really helpful if you could let your child's class teacher know if you do not have a device or internet access at home. At Hill West we have decided that

- Where one pupil has to shield or self-isolate they will continue to learn from home by accessing a home learning pack issued by school weekly (further supported by Oak National Academy/BBC Bitesize and school specific platforms).
- If a class bubble / year group bubble has to isolate they will continue to learn from home by accessing a home learning pack issued by school weekly and be further supported by daily zoom teacher-led sessions.



## **SAFEGUARDING – Domestic Abuse**

You will have seen on national TV or in the press that the coronavirus crises has seen a rise in domestic abuse with three quarters of victims saying the lockdown made it harder for them to escape their abusers. The NSPCC defines domestic abuse as any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and witnessing domestic abuse is a form of child abuse. They remind us that domestic abuse can happen

- Inside and outside the home
- Over the phone, on the internet or on social networking sites
- In any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended
- To men and women.

Living in a home where domestic abuse happens can have a serious impact on a child or young person's mental and physical wellbeing, as well as their behaviour. And this can last into adulthood. What's important is to make sure the abuse stops and that children have a safe and stable environment to grow up in. This takes courage. The NSPCC can support children who have experienced domestic abuse and help them to move on and receive the care they need.

Report abuse 0808 800 5000 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

## **Brain Development**

Last week I was fortunate enough to attend a virtual seminar with Dr Suzanne Zeedyk. In it she talked about the importance of relationships and their impact on the development of the brain. She argues that babies' brains develop partly on the basis of the genetic codes that they have, but they also develop on the basis of the kinds of relationships that they have with other people, the kinds of responses that they get.

Suzanne tells us that if we create for babies / young children a world that is calm and predictable then their brain is developing in a calm and predictable way, and they will carry that motorway system with them, expecting that the world will be calm and predictable. Children react to the environment that we give them to react to. As such children that have had early experiences anti and post-natal that are not calm and predictable they have developed less well defined stress regulation systems. They are less able to sooth themselves and are often on high alert – looking for the next threat. When this happened the child produces a lot of a hormone called cortisol, which we all need at times of stress. But if a child has cortisol in their system all the time, they are always on high alert and this means their brains are developing to cope with as Suzanne puts it 'sabre tooth tigers'. Their brain will always then look for sabre toothed tigers, so we will have created a little person who thinks the world is a bit of a threatening place and will always spend some of their energy looking for threat. If they are looking for threat it will be harder for them to empathise, it will be harder for them to connect to other people because actually they will be a bit anxious about other people.

"It comes as a surprise to many people that the way a person is treated as a child should have a lasting impact on their biology, their health and their behaviour" (s. Zeedyk).



## **Phonic Screening Autumn 2020 – Year 2**

Cancellation of the phonics screening check in June 2020 for pupils in Year 1 means that they will now need to take the check this autumn while in Year 2. Year 2 pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics autumn check will not be required to complete any further statutory assessments in phonics.

Schools have flexibility to decide when they administer the check within the second half of the 2020 autumn term (between the October half term and Christmas). Pupils in the same cohort can take the check on different days. If a pupil is absent when the rest of the cohort takes the check, schools can administer the check to the pupil at any point up until the end of the 2020 autumn term. At Hill West we are planning on starting the check, which is administered on a one-to-one basis at the end of November.

## **Times Tables Rock Stars**

At Hill West we subscribe to Times Tables Rock Stars (TTRS). This is a system aimed at **Years 2 - 6** that the children use to practise the instant recall of their multiplication and division facts. Times Table Rock Stars is primarily a home learning tool which should be accessed alongside other Maths homework set by the class teacher. We know that, when it comes to times tables, speed and accuracy are important – the more facts a child remembers, the easier it is for them to complete harder calculations. Research shows that daily practice is the best strategy for children to learn these important facts. Short bursts of daily practice are much more effective than spending hours once a week; that is why we expect children to access Times Table Rock Stars for at least 25 minutes over the course of a week, preferably divided into 5 minutes per day.